

The recent increases in the cost of natural gas, heating oil and gasoline affect all New Hampshire residents. The New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission is concerned about the potential impact that these increases will have on utility customers across the state.

While electric and natural gas rates are approved by the Commission, they are influenced by global factors affecting demand and supply. Electricity rates are also affected by natural gas prices as many electric generation plants burn natural gas to produce electricity. As natural gas prices rise so does the cost of generating electricity at those plants. There are steps that New Hampshire consumers can take, however, to help reduce the impact of higher costs.



Managing Your Natural Gas or Electric Utility Bill

- Taking steps to conserve energy at home can help. Conserving energy helps reduce your utility bills and lessen the impact of rate increases.
- Over the long term, energy efficient improvements to your home reduce your gas or electricity use. Learn about the energy efficiency programs available through your electric and natural gas companies.
- Both your natural gas company and your electric company offer budget billing programs which spread your bills out over a 12 month period, helping you to budget better. Call your utility to learn more or to enroll.
- If you are on a limited income, call your utility or your local community action agency about programs that may be available to help you with your utility bills.
- Call your utility if you are having difficulty paying your bill and ask for a payment arrangement.

Budget Billing

Budget billing spreads monthly payments over the year, allowing you to pay the same amount each month. While the overall amount you pay will be the same with budget billing, it allows you to more evenly spread the cost out across the year, making the amount due more predictable. With predictable monthly payments, your winter expenses will be easier to manage.

Energy Conservation Tips

Turn Down Your Thermostat. It's one of the most effective ways to cut your power usage. If you can be comfortable with, and your health permits, a slightly cooler home, lower the thermostat by a couple of degrees. Don't forget to turn down your thermostat when you are not home and at night when you go to bed.

Take Care of Your Furnace. Have your heating system inspected and serviced annually for more efficient operation. Check your duct work. Dust, lint and other debris can block air vents and reduce the efficiency of your furnace, so be sure to keep ducts and grills clean. Also take time to insulate ductwork that runs through unheated areas like basements or crawl spaces.

Turn Down the Tank. You can reduce your energy consumption by turning your hot water tank down to 120 degrees. Insulate your hot water pipes and install a water heater insulation blanket on your tank.

Cook Smart. A microwave uses half the energy of a conventional oven. If you do use a conventional oven, don't pre-heat the oven any longer than necessary. Pre-heat food in the microwave and then finish cooking in a conventional oven.

Energy Efficiency Programs

New Hampshire's electric and gas utilities offer a variety of energy efficiency programs to their customers. Energy efficiency improvements such as insulation, air sealing, thermostat replacement, electric hot water conservation measures, and cost effective appliance and lighting upgrades can provide you with long-term savings in your utility bill. For more information about the programs offered by your electric and natural gas companies, contact your company directly.

Assistance with Your Utility Bill

Payment Arrangements. If you are having trouble paying your utility bill, contact your utility. Payment arrangements are available to all customers, regardless of income, who are having difficulty paying their bill in full.

Bill Assistance. You may qualify for assistance from programs managed by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, your utility, or the New Hampshire Community Action Agencies. These programs are generally for low-income families and families in crisis.

New Hampshire's natural gas companies are offering a new program this year providing help to their low-income customers. Additionally, the energy efficiency programs offered by the natural gas and electric utilities have programs for low-income customers. These programs help reduce energy usage through the installation of energy efficient equipment as well as insulation in your home.

The Fuel Assistance Program is another resource for low-income customers in need of help with their winter heating bills. For information about the fuel assistance program, contact your local community action agency or visit the Office of Energy and Planning at www.nh.gov/oep/programs.htm

Weatherization Assistance

The State of New Hampshire's Weatherization Program helps a limited number of low-income families reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. The program reaches out to those families most at risk due to high energy costs and without the money to make energy improvements to their homes on their own.

You can find more information about the Weatherization Assistance Program on the Office of Energy and Planning's website, <http://nh.gov/oep/programs.htm>, or from your local community action agency.

Community Action Agencies

Community Action Program, Belknap/Merrimack Counties

www.bm-cap.org

- Concord 225-6880
- Franklin 934-3444
- Laconia 524-5512
- Meredith 279-4096
- Suncook 485-7824
- Warner 456-2207

Rockingham Community Action

www.rcaction.org

- Portsmouth 436-3896/1-800-639-3896
- Salem 898-8435

Southern New Hampshire Services (Hillsborough County)

www.snhshome.homestead.com

- Manchester 647-4470/1-800-322-1073
- Nashua 889-3440/1-877-211-0723
- Peterborough 924-2243

Southwestern Community Services (Cheshire and Sullivan Counties)

www.scshehelps.org

- Keene 352-7512/1-800-529-0005
- Claremont 542-9528

Strafford County Community Action

www.straffcap.org

- Dover 749-1334 Milton 652-9893
- Rochester 332-3963 Farmington 755-9305

Tri-County Community Action (Coos, Carroll and Grafton Counties)

www.tccap.org

- Berlin 752-3248 Littleton 444-6653
- Colebrook 237-8168 Plymouth 536-8222
- Lancaster 788-4477 Woodsville 747-3013
- Lebanon 448-4553
- Carroll County 323-7400/1-888-842-3835

New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission

www.puc.nh.gov

1-800-852-3793

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